

TWO SPEECHES

OF THE

Right Honourable C. J. Fox;

THE FIRST, ON THE

King's Message to the House of Commons

ON THE

EXECUTION OF LOUIS CAPET,

January 31st:

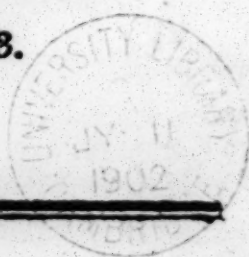
THE SECOND, ON THE

King's Message to the House of Commons,

ON THE

DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST
ENGLAND BY FRANCE,

February 11th, 1793.



L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. RIDGWAY,
YORK-STREET, ST. JAMES'S.

1793.

(Price Six-pence.)

TWO STITCHES

OF THE

Right Honourable G. J. Fox

THE FIRST OF THE

King's Message to the House of Commons

OF THE

EXECUTION OF LOUIS CAPET

January 21st

THE SECOND OF THE

King's Message to the House of Commons

808.2712

DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST

ENGLAND BY FRANCE

February 19th 1793

Printed by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.

1793

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.

By the Author, at the end of the Volume.

1793

Printed by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.

MR. FOX'S SPEECH,

FEBRUARY 1st, 1793.

MR. FOX began by stating, that though some words that had fallen from Mr. Pitt, in the conclusion of his speech, led him to suppose the question not to be of such very great importance as some had conceived; yet still it implicated enough of importance; still it possessed a sufficient degree of relation to the subject of peace or war, to make it necessary for him to trouble the House at some length. Never had he known a period in which the duties of his station bound every man more strongly to deliver his sentiments openly and firmly. And this objection received an additional degree of strength from the manner in which the debate had been recently conducted; and from that species of misrepresentation which had been made of the sentiments of those gentlemen who differed in opinion with administration. Notwithstanding, however, these difficulties, the service in which he was employed

B

ployed was a service of honour as well as of danger ; and entertaining these sentiments, he should conceive that he shrunk from his duty to his constituents, and to the people at large, if the cries and calumnies whispered with such eagerness, and believed with incredible credulity, were to deter him from deprecating a war with France, as the greatest calamity in which this nation could be involved. The business of the day had been ably introduced by the chancellor of the exchequer, and in a manner conformable to his expectations. Much acuteness of observation had been employed on the conduct of France, on her follies and absurdities ; but the right honourable gentleman had not been quite so accurate in the subsequent part of his speech, and in those arguments which he had adduced as grounds for a war, not to mention an armament. And first, with respect to those general topics of the crimes of France, he trusted that he should not be thought less of for putting those crimes wholly out of his consideration. The death of the French king he conceived to be an event as disgraceful as the page of history could furnish ; and though in conversation he had held this language, that the punishment of kings was sometimes a meritorious deed, yet he desired not to be understood to feel less abhorrence of the inhuman and unjust execution of the unfortunate king of the French—inhuman, inasmuch as he was put to death without a cause—inhuman, inasmuch as the French had evinced, in their conduct, a total want of that magnanimity, which, much as he admired monarchy, he still conceived to form a component part of the republican character ; it was unjust, because the rigid rules of justice ought never to bend to convenience. The king was invested with an impunity that was not the consequence of inviolability, for the law had declared the specific punishment of abdication for those very crimes which he was alledged to have committed. Notwithstanding all this, he owned that he did not see the propriety of the parliament of Great Britain expressing any opinion on this public act, unless it was to be alledged as a ground affecting this country. It was not for the purpose of reminding the house of former crimes and atrocities that he stated
this

this to be a principle of policy, viz.—that crimes committed in one state were not cognizable in another. Great Britain was not allied with France at the massacre of Paris, but she was allied with powers that maintained an intimate connexion with France. Nevertheless she did not go to war on account of that massacre.—Great Britain, in her transactions with Spain, had never taken cognizance of the inquisition. The inhabitants of the nation considered that horrible institution in their individual capacity, but their feelings had no influence on their political principles. For this reason, he meant not to dwell on the horrid massacres of September, which, though caused in part by the manifestoes of the duke of Brunswick, received from that source no palliation of the conduct of the French. He proceeded now to consider the confederacy formed against France. A confederacy more dangerous never existed in Europe. The treaty of Pillnitz contained a stipulation, that whenever a fit occasion offered, such powers were to invade France. Let this country place herself in the situation of France, and then decided upon her conduct. The treaty, therefore, was the act of aggression. But with regard to the king of Prussia, could any doubt be entertained of his being the aggressor? What had he to do with France? What right had he to interfere in her government? The fact was, that the combined powers saw certain principles in the French system of legislation which they disliked. They had the audacity to have recourse to arms for the purpose of moulding her to their will, and of establishing the old system of despotism. Should such an event happen, as in former times had occasioned the people of Great Britain to interfere in the government of their kings, certainly other monarchs of Europe would be exasperated at the conduct of the people; but would it be borne, that such monarchs should form a confederacy, and invade the country? Undoubtedly not. It was not his intention to travel again over those manifestoes, that were so infamous and detestable, that he believed not more than *one person* in the House, would be found to defend them, but he adverted to them for the purpose of noticing an

assertion, that they were not meant to be executed.—If that could operate as an excuse for them, he certainly could feel no inclination to check the effect of it. But as the conduct of the French in Brabant had been so much reprobated, it would be well to consider whether the conduct of the Duke of Brunswick in France, was not equally entitled to reprobation. The duke did not, he allowed, adopt the same mode of conduct as the French in Brabant. He did not confiscate property. He paid for every article he bought in France, but in this manner. He forced the poor inhabitants to receive bills drawn on, and payable by the French government, when it had attained its old form. In a swindling manner, he gave a receipt the name of the French king, at the very period when he retreated from France, and left the government of France in the same situation in which he found it. This mode, if not worse, was certainly every bit as bad as the conduct of the French in Brabant. At that time, however, Great Britain did not think proper to interfere, but as soon as the combined armies had failed of attaining their object, the administration endeavoured to inflame the passions of men by adverting to that conduct adopted by the French, which, when pursued by the French, had not occasioned in their minds the slightest sentiments of anger. The probable grounds of the war in which the country was about to enter were three: 1st. The conduct of the French as far as it related to aggressions on Holland. 2d. The decree passed by the National Convention on the 19th of November. And, 3d. The general safety of Europe. On the first ground, the minister had acted in his usual manner; he had not contended that Holland actually required Great Britain to go to war: till such specific requisition therefore, was made, we were not bound to enter into a war. The minister, however, had asserted that the country was bound by good faith, and by treaty. If that were true, why was Holland so backward in demanding the performance of this obligation? Her not demanding it, plainly proved that Great Britain was not bound by honour, perhaps the only solid ground on which any war could

could be entered into. With regard to the sentiments of the Dutch, on the opening of the Scheldt, a paper alluded to by Mr. Whitbread, was of material importance. In that paper, for the observance of a fast, the Dutch say, "It is true that a large army surrounds us; but the neutrality we have hitherto observed, has saved us from any molestation from that army."—Hence his own opinion, declared on the first day of the session, received additional strength and energy. But it might be said, that the French had broken their faith with the Dutch; that neither could be, nor never had been, a reason for Great Britain going to war with France. But according to the language of the minister, this country was not bound by the letter, but by the spirit of the treaty. In his own opinion, however, the spirit led quite a contrary way. By the treaty, Great Britain had engaged to defend Holland from peril, not to lead her into it—to avenge real, not imaginary, insults offered to her.—The second ground of her woe was, the decree of the 19th of November. That decree he certainly considered as an insult on the rights of all neutral nations. An explanation of it had been given, proving that the French meant not to carry it into operation in an objectionable way. This certainly evinced a desire on the part of France, for the continuance of peace, and though the explanation might prove dissatisfactory, inasmuch as it contradicted the true meaning of the decree, yet the degradation alone, attached itself to these; from them this contradiction proceeded. The conduct of administration towards France, had evinced a degree of haughtiness unexampled. Insults were complained of, but not specified; security demanded, but the nature of that security not defined. For his own part, he was afraid that the meaning of the term, on the part of administration, implicated a mode of conduct that would totally preclude France from being able to afford any satisfaction. For had administration mentioned any specific object? No. Had a requisition been made to withdraw the French troops from Brabant? No. Such a demeanour would have been as much as to say, that Great Britain would still preserve her neutrality; but France must withdraw her troops, and suffer those of the emperor to act at pleasure. But France
had

had declared that she would evacuate Brabant, not, however, in a satisfactory way, for she had declared she would not evacuate it, till the Belgic liberty had been consolidated. What her ideas of liberty might be were not definable, but still she evinced a desire for peace with Great Britain, by doing that which it was not usual for any nation to do to other nations with whom she was not at war. Great Britain acted like the bye-stander, who assuring two men about to fight that he was neutral, should declare that he would knock down him who should strike the first blow. Whether the possession of Brabant by the French was improper, was an abstract question, but if it were improper, administration ought to have proceeded in another way. They ought to have given France early notice of their intentions. They ought to have rendered it possible for her to have considered that notice, and to have returned a matured answer. Administration however did nothing of this. —They had received propositions; they had said that this was an insult, and that an insult. They had promulgated their anger without stating in what manner that anger could be appeased; they had violated this incontrovertible axiom in politics, that that war must be unjust which should be entered into without a previous explanation of the mode that would have tended to avert it. If such a mode of conduct, however, was impolitic as far as it related to the French, what was it to the people of England? They were to be driven into a war without knowing the specific object. They did not know whether the object might be to procure the retreat of the French from Brabant, and whether that object could not be obtained without a war. —But it had been said that security ought to be had against the propagation of French principles—What security? The French, perhaps, might be induced to retire from Brabant, which they had conquered from an invading foe; but would they suffer the operations of the mind to be fettered and enchained?—and this discussion of security, naturally led him to the third probable ground of War, the general safety of Europe. The general safety of Europe was certainly an object of importance, to which however the present Minister had been extremely inattentive. He had

had viewed with scandalous inattention the subjugation of Poland; he had evinced such inactivity and carelessness with respect to the invasion of France, that it would be difficult for him to recover any energy on the subject. If the states of Europe depended on certain stipulations, he ought first to have attempted the attainment of them without a war. He had now stated three points, none of which afforded any cause for war. What then remained but this ground, which had never been avowed, but which seemed ever present to the imaginations of the supporters of a war? The internal government of France: Any interference in her internal government had always been disavowed, yet always commented upon at large; so well acquainted was he with the mode of arguing adopted in the House, that he was certain when any subject was touched upon in the discussion, it was meant to operate in aid of such a war. The internal government of France was the object of the invasion by the combined armies; what then was the country to be driven to at last, but to this most unjustifiable conduct, to attempt to procure in a circuitous manner the restoration of the old despotism of France, which the combined armies had attempted in a more open and avowed way. If this were the real cause of war he had no doubt, but in a short space of time, it would receive the general execration and abhorrence of the whole world, inasmuch as it tended to bind the mind again with these fetters which it had thrown off. In this period of misrepresentation, he had no doubt, that in stating his detestation of the ancient despotism of France, he should be said to approve of the present form of government in France; such misrepresentations, however, he disregarded. He had before said, that administration had suggested a cause for war, which was only the apparent not the real one. They thereby pursued the example of the French, who professed a moderation at their entrance into the Netherlands, which their subsequent conduct totally belied. On the ground, however, of meddling with the States of Brabant, he did not know, on the old story of the woman taken in adultery, which nation ought to cast the first stone.—Certainly not the courts of Berlin and London. For the purpose

purpose of inflaming the minds of the people, a noble lord had talked much of the former freedom of the Brabanters; they had he said their *pacta conventa*—the concessions of freedom of their monarchs, and other privileges.—Did the Emperors Joseph, Leopold, or Francis give them freedom? No, the fact was, that the *Joyeuse entrée* was the grand charter of Brabant, and when Dumourier entered Brussels, at the Postern gate ran away the court of Brussels. When they had got a few miles from the city, they sent word to the inhabitants that they freely gave them the *Joyeuse entrée*, and this was the concession of liberty granted to the Brabanters by their sovereign. In all considerations of a war, the probable gain and loss were objects of discussion. What could this country gain? extension of territory was not intended: indeed it was not a desirable object. What could this country lose? and here begged not to be understood to be alarmed at the threat of the minister of the French marine. But with respect to the ally of Great Britain, could any one say that the republic and the Stadtholder would not be affected in a way which he was not bold enough to mention. The situation of Ireland was properly an object of consideration; some applause had been given to Lord Wycombe, when he seemed to express himself with delicacy on that subject. For his own part, however, he did not approve of that conduct which tended to shut the eyes to what formed a necessary part of the discussion. In Ireland, administration had done every thing in their power to bring themselves into disrepute.—They wanted, indeed, the assistance of a gentleman (Mr. Wyndham), who had once condescended to accept the office of secretary to the lord lieutenant. They had employed their leisure in stirring up the protestants against the catholics, and they had reduced the country to such a situation, that concession was now to be deemed wisdom. At home, he believed the people to be firmly attached to the constitution.—They were attached to it from prejudice and reason, from habit, and from theory. But why was that attachment to be put to the test! Would the constitution appear more amiable from war, from the imposition of additional taxes, and fresh burthens?

burthens? If any danger were to be apprehended from the propagation of French principles, would it not result from war? Every blow struck would favour that propagation, and perhaps even success would not arrest the operation of it. And a few words on those principles.—It was fit that the house should understand what was reprobated in so lumpery a manner. His own opinion was, that the principles in themselves were good. What was the French Declaration of Equality? that all men are equal in respect of their rights. He who had a shilling, had as much right to it as he who had a hundred pounds.—Men possessed equal rights in unequal things. He who had a cottage, had as much power in it as he who had a palace. Their rights were equal, though the objects unequal. The principles therefore were good. It was the abuse of them that deserved reprobation. He had had too many controversies with Mr. Burke to wish to draw upon himself additional severity of remark, but still that wish shall not prevent him from saying, *that the people are the sovereigns in all countries—That they might amend, alter, and abolish the form of government under which they lived at pleasure—that they might cashier their monarchs for misconduct.*—James the Second was cashiered. The people elected William, not only in opposition to the rights of descent inherent in James, but in opposition to the rights of his son and daughter. They elected the House of Brunswick, not an individual member of that family, but the whole dynasty. It was clear, therefore, that the present family enjoyed the throne from the sovereignty of the people. Entertaining, therefore, those opinions, he could not accede to that position of Mr. Burke; that though they possessed the sovereignty before the revolution, they did not possess it afterwards.—It was always inherent in them, and those who lived at the revolution had no power to surrender that sovereignty which they exercised, and to deprive posterity of it. He had been led into this digression by those who had in so general a manner reprobated all the principles of French legislation. If there were any who, from prejudice or error, disliked monarchy, such dislike had been undoubtedly occasioned by those who had

removed it from the solid foundation on which it ought to stand, and had placed it on the flimsy foundation of supposed rights, separated from the rights of the people. He recurred now to the argument, that principles could not be opposed by weapons. The principles introduced into Brabant, were neither introduced, nor could they be repelled by force, and this was a circumstance in which he gloried, that though Dumourier had liberated Brabant, yet French principles were by no means popular there.—Administration seemed to consider principles as the article of commerce, the importation of which could be restrained at pleasure.—It was a melancholy consideration that war had always been the passion of men, and he sadly feared would always continue to be. It was curious to observe the grounds on which they had been entered into.—The first wars were wars for opinions—Then came wars for religion, for the extirpation of Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Popery—Next wars of conquest—But it would be agreed by all, that commercial wars never attained their objects. Having traversed all the battered grounds, administration thought proper to return to wars for opinion, to wars for religion. In that excellent publication circulated by the treasury, which Mr. Pitt had received from a friend *whom he never saw, and whom he did not know*, but which had been sent to a great majority of the House, Mr. Dupont's speech was contained.—Would any one say that atheism was the prevailing principle in France? Or if it were, were this country to carry fire and sword into France for the purpose of propagating the Christian religion. Why then was this speech introduced into the publication? Why, but to delude and inflame the minds of men in such a manner as to prevent them from exercising their reason.—What were the real grounds of war? Insult, perjury, or danger. If the country had received insult, reparation should be demanded. The same argument held good with respect to the second cause. If danger be apprehended, it should be stated; and if it could not be averted by pacific measures, then a just cause of war immediately accrued. As yet he had said nothing of negotiations—indeed he felt at a loss to understand

stand how the administration could treat with persons whose authority they denied. The interruption that had taken place in negotiation by Lord Gower's recall he very much lamented. His stay at Paris would not have been a more decisive act of recognition than negotiating with M. Chavelin. The dismissal of this gentleman had something new in it. It seems as if the ministry disliked the man rather than the country which he represented. A curious argument had been used by a noble Lord, that England ought to hate France for her conduct in the American war. This duty of hatred was a duty perfectly new, but was it the present government of France that interfered in the American war?—No; it was the old government, which therefore was properly the subject of hatred. Indeed it was somewhat hard that the French should be recognized as the legitimate successors only to what made against them. Returning to the grounds of war, Mr. Fox contended again, that as the calamities of war were great, the nation had a right to know the specific cause that occasioned a war. Of all events he deprecated a war, but of all wars he deprecated that which had no specific object, and to which therefore he could see no end. When the country went to war with America, a specific object was stated. He was old enough to remember the beginning of that war—how men's minds were inflamed by those who sat on the ministerial side of the House, *and who were now re-returning to the place from whence they came.*—He was old enough to remember the abuse of the Congress, of Mr. Hancock, and Mr. Adams; he also remembered the subsequent degradation to which this country was forced to submit. In that war, at least, a specific cause was stated; now however, there were none. Was the decree of the 19th of November one? No. Was the reduction of Brabant one? Would the Emperor and the King of Prussia fight alone for the Netherlands? No. They might have had them without a blow if they had refrained from invading France. As therefore no specific object had been stated, he had a right to say that the country was going to war blind-folded and in the dark. How many would believe that the war was to establish the old despotism of

France ? The minister at least ought to undeceive those who indulged this horrible supposition. He ought to do more, he ought point out the real cause which would entitle him to a vote of thanks, and to a general amnesty for all his former errors. He entreated him to survey the consequences—to look at possible misfortunes—at the state of Ireland—he ought to imagine that it might involve in it consequences injurious to the very existence of the constitution. He ought not to suffer it to be said, that it was a war of kings against the people—of men of property against those who had none, or that the country was fighting for the language of the Duke of Brunswick's miserable manifestoes.

Having stated the grounds on which he deprecated a war, he begged to say one word of himself. He could not walk about the the streets without hearing whispers of plots and designs, and of his own and his friends' correspondence with men in France. If any had reason to believe that he, or any with whom he was connected, had really adopted such a mode of conduct, he challenged them to come forth and institute an inquiry. He did not know before his perusal of Mr. Law's letter, that he lived in a town, where any persons calling themselves gentlemen, thought it decent or proper to receive anonymous letters, attaching grievous charges to different persons, and to answer those letters. As such practices, however, were adopted, he thought it proper to make a challenge in the broadest manner that language could admit of. If any man had heard that he had corresponded with improper persons in France, he had heard a falsehood. Having made this assertion, he conceived that he possessed a right to demand the candour of the House; and to desire that his actions should not be imputed to motives of an improper, or a sinister nature.

SPEECH

S P E E C H

ON THE

Kings Message for War against France.

AFTER Mr. Powys sat down, Mr. Fox began by stating, that on a subject of such importance, and, in his view of it, not less alarming than important, it would ill become one who had taken no small part in the various debates which it had occasioned—it would ill become one who had the honour to represent so large a City as Westminster, to decline, from any motives whatever, a full and ample statement of his sentiments. It would be indeed a poor excuse for neglecting what he conceived to be his duty, and for refraining to point out what conduct the House ought to pursue; to say that he feared those misconstructions and misrepresentations with which the seconder of the address (Mr. Powys) had threatened him—He did not fear them—He meant to meet them boldly, conscious that the principles on which he acted would bear the severest and strictest scrutiny.—And first, though rather irregular in point of mode, he begged leave to make some animadversions on the speech of Mr. Powys before he animadverted on that of Mr. Pitt.—The former gentleman had stated himself to be no systematic supporter
of

of the existing Administration.—He did not mean to contradict that statement; but he could not avoid wishing that he had not thought it necessary, at the same time, to make some allusions not perfectly honourable to other persons. He had stated that some were advocates of French principles—"Let him," said Mr. Fox, "name them." If he means the allusions only as threats, he has been long enough a member of the House to know, that similar threats have been hurled in former times, and hurled without effect.—He has been long enough a member of the House to know, that on former occasions, though the band of men on whom these threats were poured was small, yet that they fearlessly and firmly pursued that path which their conscience dictated to them to be the path of duty. At present, Mr. Fox continued, as in former times, the band was also small, but he was convinced that it was composed of men who would pursue the same mode of conduct as those who had preceded them, and who would dare to state their opposition to the address without fear of being alledged to be the advocates of French principles and French opinions. Mr. Powys had spoken out—he rejoiced at it, because it gave the House and the people an opportunity of judging fairly; but, he trusted, that the sentiments and conduct of the mover and seconder of the address were, and would be different; he trusted, that the former proceeded on motives diametrically opposite to those which had actuated the latter: the latter had said, that he considered France as a monster, whose arms were lifted up against every nation, and against whom every nation ought therefore to exert its power.—He had understood Mr. Pitt to move the address on no such grounds: he understood him to found it not on his bad opinion of the French principles, but on specific acts of aggression. *In primo limine*, a difference of opinion existed between himself and these two gentlemen, for he could not avoid looking, even at the commencement of a war, for the consummation of peace. He could not refrain from hoping, that when certain specific objects had been attained, and when the nation had received satisfaction and indemnity, that the country would again enjoy the blessings of peace.

If

If France, however, were that monster which Mr. Powys had represented her to be—if it were true that her arms were raised against all nations, and that therefore all nations should lift up their arms against her, then the extirpation of one of the contending parties could alone stop the effusion of blood, and thus could he see no end to the war.—It seemed on that principle to be a war similar to that carried on against America, which had for its object unconditional submission. In views far different to these he trusted Mr. Pitt to be sincere; though, for his own part, he did not conceive him to have made out his case: but when he adverted to the arguments used by those who supported the war—when he heard it contended that this ought to be a war of extirpation, *Bellum internecinum*—he was indeed alarmed, and every illustration only tended to increase that alarm. It had been asked what the nation was to gain by a war?—And this question had been answered by Mr. Powys, by an allusion to the case of an highwayman. His object would not only be to save his purse from the highwayman, but as he would not certainly compound felony, he would pursue him as a pest to society. This was an illustrative answer, founded on no particular act of aggression, but on the destruction of France; such an illustration, however, had been reprobated by the mover of the address. He had not said that the object of the war was to restore monarchy in France, or to intermeddle with the internal government of France—he had not assimilated the case to that of a person being attacked by a highwayman, whom it would be improper to leave at liberty to propagate his doctrines and his principles, even though he might be previously deprived of his pistol and cutlafs.

The present was not a war on the old system, but on a new one, that left no probability of peace. It was a war, the probable conclusion of which could not be calculated from any former event of a similar nature. With regard to the propriety of supporting administration, Mr. Powys would certainly do as he thought fit; but he ought certainly to have heard first the sentiments of persons, before he insinuated that they alienated the minds of the people.—Entertaining



ertaining, however, a wish to make this insinuation, he certainly did right in seconding the motion; for he knew, that had he listened to the observations of those particular persons, it would not have been in his power to have made the insinuation at all. With respect to the joy expressed by Mr. Powys, that the people thought better of administration than they deserved, that joy conducted him to the argument of confidence, which tended to overturn the first pillar of the constitution, from which the nation was taught to regard all confidence with a jealous eye, and to consider the propagation of the doctrine of confidence, as utterly subversive of the best and most invaluable privileges, emanating from the constitution. Monarchy had been asserted to be the key-stone of British liberty, but there was another key-stone not less valuable, that of jealousy and rational distrust of those in power. Such were the arguments which appeared to him to convey a satisfactory reply to the seconder of the address. With regard to the mover of it, he confessed that he had experienced much disappointment. He had expected, when the nation was engaged in a war, that the minister would have conceived unanimity to be a desirable event, and on that account would have proposed an address of a different kind. He had hoped that the gratification of prevailing over the small number who are supposed to be inimical to him, would have yielded to a desire, that the address should receive unanimous approbation. He had trusted that the House would not have had an address submitted to them, worded in such a manner as to preclude a future enquiry into the conduct of ministers, and almost to express a direct approbation of their measures. Had not this been the case he would have given his consent to the address, and, however different his opinions might be with respect to any particular measures, however he might have conceived some, not as many believed to be, temperate but provoking, yet he would have waved these considerations and have afforded unequivocal support. A different course, however, had been pursued, and the House had been desired to accede to an address that denied the existence of any aggression on the part of Great Britain. To such a one he found it impossible to give his assent. It

seemed

seemed, indeed, as if it had been purposely worded in such a manner as to render unanimity impossible. All that remained for him to do was to propose a second address, not liable to the same objections as the first; for, as on one hand he opposed those who approved of the conduct of administration, so on the other hand he had taken care to avoid attaching any particular blame to them for their conduct. The House should consider the general state of the country, as far as it bore any relation to war. And here he did not mean to enter into the general topic of the calamities of war, though he knew of no subject that furnished more common places—which term, however, he used not in any contemptuous way. But it should be considered, that though the House was not pressed to the length of saying, that because the commerce of the country was prosperous, no war ought to be entered into; yet, that the nation ought not to be plunged into a war without a specific statement of the causes that had made it necessary to incur a war, and of the objects which it was meant to acquire—unless the security of the nation were threatened, and her honor invaded, she ought not to go to war; and the opinion he had formerly maintained, that the point of honor was the only just point for which a nation should go to war; he meant still to maintain the points of aggression, as stated by Mr. Pitt, afforded no ground of war, till satisfaction for such aggressions had been previously refused. For supposing that the old government of France had passed a decree, similar to that of the 19th of November, a demand would have been made to retract it. Such a demand, however, spite of the arguments of M. Pitt, under the present government of France had not been made. Lord Grenville in his letter had indeed complained of it, but he had not pointed out any specific mode by which satisfaction might be procured to the British nation, or security be established. He, therefore, had a right to say, that in no possible way could France afford satisfaction. In regard to the Scheldt, he remained completely unconvinced, inasmuch as no mode of satisfaction was pointed out, and this argument applied equally to the case of increase of dominion.

D

Had

Had administration insisted upon the French quitting Brabant while they were at war with the Emperor, it would have been a requisition with which they could not possibly have complied. The same observation was applicable to the capture of Savoy, the French being at war with the King of Sardinia. On all these points the minister did nothing but complain, giving no explanation of his wishes, or if the mode by which peace could be preserved. These therefore were no grounds for war, and this was not only his opinion, but the opinion of every writer who had written on the subject. A new case however had arisen, totally different from all former cases, and melancholy indeed this case was—and here he begged leave to lament, without being accused of egotism, that the members of the House should have paid so little attention to the magnitude and importance of the subject, as to have deprived him, by their non-attendance, of the power of making that motion, of which he had given notice on Thursday. It was his wish to have made that motion antecedent to the war. It was his wish to have demanded an explanation of the real causes and objects of the war. It was his wish to have pointed out the evils of it. His wishes, however, had been disappointed, and the nation was now at war; but still his arguments would apply generally to the subject, and though prevention was not now in his power, it was still competent to him to suggest such observations as appeared to be necessary to carry on and conclude the war with dignity and honour. Mr. Pitt had read and commented on the various reasons assigned by the French for the war they had entered into. In many of these comments he agreed with him. They certainly did not afford sufficient grounds for War. But he begged to be permitted to say, without being supposed to be an advocate for France, that in the former *good* times of France reasons for a war had been stated equally absurd. Instead of containing a solemn statement, replete with nothing but truth, they generally implicated a statement diametrically the reverse. In the Spanish war of 1779, the articles made by Spain contained a series of assertions, none of which were founded in truth. Absurd, however,

however, as some of the reasons assigned by the Republic of France were, still it was not fair to say they were all absurd. Much had been said on the recall of Lord Gower. With regard to this subject, he had said so much, and received so small satisfaction, that he should content himself with saying very little. He should repeat what he had before said, that his Lordship's stay at Paris would neither have sanctioned nor recognized any power in France.—Indeed, what had been said in the present debate had strengthened this opinion.—It had been asked, whether it was proper to recognize a temporary and provisional power? The answer he should give was, that being temporary, the recognition would only extend to the term of its duration. Indeed he had so many arguments to prove that recognition conveyed no obligation, and gave no sanction, that it would be needless to repeat them. In the case of Spain, in the time of Philip, had it ever been imagined that the recognition had been binding?—No. When the Peace of Ryswick was made, and the French treated with William as King of England, did not the treaty contain a specific article of recognition? And yet while the French pursued this mode of conduct, there were ministers employed in obtaining a recognition only *pro tempore*. The continuance of Lord Gower, therefore, at Paris, would have not been at all obligatory; for as the English nation were at peace with nations that sent no ambassadors, so this circumstance of sending ambassadors could not be considered either as affording or withholding a sanction to the government of any country whatever. A variety of other grounds had been stated by Mr. Pitt. In some of the arguments adduced from the suppression of assignats, he perfectly agreed with him. It was an absurd cause for declaring war, but he could not coincide in some of the observations that had been made upon it. Assignats were stated to be worth nothing, and yet the legislature thought fit to stop this gigantic system of swindling, though it possessed no value. Did the legislature pass an act for prohibiting the circulation of the drafts of the combined armies that entered France?—No. Perhaps such a measure might be rendered

dered unnecessary by their total want of value—Did the government of the country forbid the circulation of the paper money of the congress?—No. It seemed therefore as if the prohibition of the circulation of assignats was adopted, rather for the purpose of fomenting and encouraging the hostile disposition of the French. Another act of hostility on the part of England was the stopping the exportation of corn. No good reason had yet been given for this measure, and the minister had at last been obliged to come with his double mode of argument, and confess that it would have been an act aggression if it had not been coupled with preceding acts. In itself, therefore, it was unjustifiable, and if the preceding acts were hostile, they rendered a war defensible without such a stoppage of the exportation.

He adverted now to the Alien bill, which he maintained to be an infringement of the treaty of commerce, for the treaty had expressly defined what should be done in cases of disputes between two nations, viz. that explanation should take place—But had any such explanation taken place? No; the Alien bill, however, had been complained of by the French, and all answer had been refused by the administration of Great Britain.—Another measure stated by Mr. Pitt was, the sending a squadron to the Scheldt, and here the minister availed himself of an unfair advantage of every popular argument, that the French complained of this squadron, because it was to disturb forsooth their operations in Belgia. The true defence of the minister, however, to the complaint was, that the squadron had not been sent for the purpose stated by him. There were one or two more reasons which he meant to state, because it was the duty of every man to speak out—one reason was founded on the melancholy fate of the French king, and in his remarks on this, the minister had asked, whether the country was to be prohibited from indulging the liberty of grief? If this was one of the causes of war, where was the necessity of the subsequent conference between General Dumourier and Lord Auckland? did they meet to compound blood? Was it the intention of the administration to sell that event for so much of Belgia? Of such an intention

intention he did not mean to accuse the minister; nor did he mean to impute to any man almost, the willingness of carrying such an intention into execution.—The fact, however, which it was necessary to state was, that the unhappy fate of the French king was not a cause of war. And now he begged leave to appeal to the House, whether it was quite fair never to mention the subject of war, without mixing with it the fate of the king of France? In his own opinion, had an ambassador been sent to France, that melancholy event would have been prevented. It was therefore rather hard to state that as a reason which no care was taken to prevent. He came now to a circumstance to which he had never received a satisfactory answer. This was the dismissal of Monsieur Chauvelin—of the dignity of un-official un-accredited negociators, he confessed himself to be totally ignorant. He should proceed therefore to the dismissal.—It had been said that clandestine negotiations were carried on till the event alluded to, when M. Chauvelin was ordered away in eight days. He departed, however, the next day after he received the order, and yet this speedy compliance had been adduced as an argument against him. Was this, he would ask, fair or gentlemanly?—Would not any gentleman have adopted the same mode of conduct? And would he not have left, as soon as possible a place in which he found his stay to be no longer agreeable? Indeed, this was the first time he had ever heard a ready compliance with a command ever adduced as a crime against any man. This, however, was not all. Orders had been sent to Lord Auckland, at the Hague, to hold a conference with General Dumourier. During this conference, for the present, he wished to see what had been the conduct of those who professed to be lovers of peace.—When he proposed sending an ambassador to France, the majority of the house exclaimed. “What! send an ambassador! why you are already at war!”—This was not directly the conduct of administration, but they had not taken any pains to express their disapprobation of the assertion.—They had, however, set on foot negotiations. In a former
debate

debate, an honourable friend of his, had hinted the existence of those negotiations; and his majesty's principal secretary of state, in reply, had stated their existence to be *incompatible with his belief*. After these negotiations had continued for some time, the government suddenly dismissed Mons. Chauvelin, without leaving any means of communication with France, whatever. Of this mode of conduct, he rejoiced to see that the minister was ashamed, by his subsequent order to Lord Auckland, to hold a conference with General Dumourier. He came now to that old battered argument of, what could be the interest of ministers—First, with respect to Mr. Powys's quotation, "That the minister who began a war, never saw the end of it," he believed it not to be the fact; but if it were, was the House on that account always to trust to the characters of ministers? If so, surely he had a right to claim a reciprocity of confidence. By the foregoing arguments, he conceived, that he had shewn that the conduct of ministers evinced no desire for peace. They never opened a free communication—they seemed to have acted as if they had been afraid of stating their demands, fearing least those demands should be granted. It had been said, that the French had declared war against the English, on account of their attachment to their constitution. An allusion had also been made, that kings were more interested in the war than their subjects. In one point of view, he believed the allusion to be true. Mr. Powys had talked of monarchy, and had fortunately introduced the epithet, limited monarchy. But was it not possible for kings to feel sometimes a love for unlimited monarchy? The question was undoubtedly not applicable to the monarch of Great Britain; but might it not apply to the emperor of Germany, to the kings of Prussia and Spain? The king of Great Britain, by experience, had felt that a limited monarch, as he was, possessed more power than the most unlimited despot surrounded by his guards. But were not kings organized like other men! Good God! what was to become of the liberty of speech, and the freedom of debate, if a member were not at liberty to indulge a supposition, that kings might feel an inclination to possess

feels a degree of power incompatible with the happiness of the people.

An allusion seemed to have been made to something which he had either said or written, relative to the rich and poor; in that allusion he seemed to have been accused of making a distinction between them; such a distinction he never made. It was the interest of those who had no property, to support those who had, and whoever conceived him to have suggested at any time a contrary proposition, had very much mistaken him. To say that the present was the cause of men of property alone, would be to adopt such a mode of argument as that used in the confederacy against France, viz. that it was the cause of all crowned heads; to which this reply was made. "Is the other side, then, the cause of the people."

He proceeded now to consider how the cause had proceeded. Having fully evinced the disinclination of the government to peace, it became necessary to find out some cause for war. The administration could not join the confederacy against France, because that was reprobated by the whole nation. They could not interfere in the internal government of France, for such an interference was equally reprobated.—What did they then do? They stated a string of grievances which could not be redressed. It became then necessary to alarm and inflame the minds of the people. They took advantage of the unhappy fate of the King of France, and in this paroxysm of fear and rage, the nation was induced to go to war. Yet the real cause had not still been avowed, nor had it yet been stated how the war might have been avoided. It looked as if the terrors of peace were so strong on the minds of his majesty's ministers, as to make them fear to avow, even after a declaration of war, what were the objects of the war.—Alas! the calamities of the present war were not the calamities of a common war—They were calamities infinitely more extensive, because they related to an object not ascertained and undescribed. Under these circumstances, he conceived that he had a right to say, that Administration had pursued a conduct almost as reprehensible as if they had plunged into a war with

with the avowed and marked opposition of the people. And now he begged leave to suggest a few observations, not retrospective, but prospective: If there were any who suspected the causes stated to be only pretexts for war, he trusted that the future conduct of administration would do away that suspicion.—It had been said by Mr. Powys, that treaties ought to be made by all powers who would join Great Britain. If such treaties were to be made, he trusted that the administration would attend to the situation in which the country might be placed. If the objects of powers with whom the country might be inclined to treat, should be opposite to her interests, and inimical to her objects, then an alliance would be not at all desirable. It was well known, that the objects of the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia were the internal government of France. The end of all treaties was, that the terms of alliance should be faithfully executed. Thus then, after every shift and manœuvre, the country, by a treaty, might be forced to contend for that object which was now disavowed and reprobated, and that the blood and treasures of the people might be exhausted in endeavouring to procure that end which they surveyed with horror. And such a mode of conduct would afford the most apposite illustration to the arguments of Mr. Paine, and those who disliked the constitution of Great Britain. For his own part, therefore, he trusted that no alliance would be formed with any foreign power, or if there should be, that the objects of each contracting party should be explicitly stated, and distinctly ascertained. The disappointment he had met with, was from the perversion of the words “firm and temperate conduct” in his majesty’s speech.

By firm conduct he conceived was meant a remonstrance, with an armament to back any representations which it might be necessary to make. Armaments there had been—representations none; the first when alone, tended to produce consequences far different from those which would have resulted from a junction of armament and remonstrance. For his own part, he conceived that the country was never driven to a war on less grounds of justice and

and humanity than at present. He certainly meant to give his vote for supporting the crown, but he would not be bound by any of those crooked modes of reasoning, that tended to preclude him from making observations on the conduct of ministers, because he conceived that their conduct had produced the present alarm and danger in which the country was involved. — Of the effects of war he had never been very sanguine. Events were doubtful; and though the country might be successful, yet *procul absit omen!* the country might also be unsuccessful: gentlemen knew the unexpected successes of the Americans; the equally unexpected successes of the French. From similar unforeseen events this dreadful consequence might result, that the nation might be driven to wish for peace on terms less advantageous than she might have preserved it without a war. It was of peculiar importance to consider the consequences that might ensue to our ally, Holland. Victory, perhaps, might not render her situation more secure, but disappointment might produce effects of which he was afraid to think. From faith, from honor, from dignity, he recommended no derogation, because he was sensible that he who submitted to insult once, subjected himself to continued and repeated insults. But had the government stated grievances firmly and fairly, the war would then have received that infusion of dignity which would have made the *ultima ratio* honorable and just. His notion of honor and dignity was, that they rested on the strong basis of justice. All that was now left the House was to support the war; but to support it in such a manner that peace might eventually be procured on honorable terms. In conclusion, he declared, that he had inserted no expressions in the amendment he meant to propose, from which any one could dissent. The only objection was that it did not contain so forcible a declaration as the address moved by Mr. Pitt. The latter stated what was the opinion of the majority of the House. The former stated what was the opinion of the whole House. The amendment was couched in the following words—after the words “Address to his Majesty”.

“We learn with the utmost concern, that the Assembly,
who now exercise the powers of government in France, have
E directed

directed the commission of acts of hostility against the persons and property of your Majesty's subjects, and that they have since actually declared war against your Majesty and the United Provinces.—We humbly beg leave to assure your Majesty, that your Majesty's faithful Commons, will exert themselves with the utmost zeal in the maintenance of the honor of your Majesty's Crown, and the vindication of the Rights of your People. And nothing shall be wanting on our part that can contribute to that firm and effectual support which your Majesty has so much reason to expect from a brave and loyal people, in repelling every attempt against this country, and in such other exertions as may be necessary to induce France to consent to such terms of pacification as may be consistent with the honor of your Majesty's Crown, and the security of your Allies, and the interests of your People."

FINIS.

of
at
ur
al
in
to
th
ur